Semiosis, or meaning making, is a complex but important process, which defines human experience. The increase in research interest in the field of communications, media studies, and semiotics has brought a renewed attention to the multifarious nature of meaning in a text. Baldry (2000), Kress (2003) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) draw attention to the multimodal nature of contemporary society where meaning is often made through a co-deployment of a combination of semiotic resources. In other words, images, gestures, and sounds often accompany language in semiosis. This recognition of semiotic resources operating independently and interdependently on different levels in a text has ushered in a necessary transformation in the research landscape pertaining to the study of semiosis.

The process of meaning making in text is both multifaceted and multimodal. As such, understanding the meaning made in a specific text cannot equate merely to an analysis of the semiotic resource of language, but has to take into account the complex nature of semiosis through both the deployment and co-deployment of various semiotic resources. What this recognition implies is that in order to understand meaning making, it is no longer sufficient to deconstruct and analyze the use of language in a text only. Instead, the operation of other semiotic resources must also be factored in as contributing to the total meaning made in the text. There is therefore a research imperative to gain an insight into the nature of other semiotic resources, such as images, and this chapter contributes to that research. Lim (in press) posits the case for images as a semiotic resource, pos-
sessing both an expression and content plane for meaning making. It is only when the workings and dynamics of the other semiotic resources are being elucidated, can there be a clearer and better understanding of the complex process of multimodal meaning making, involving the co-deployment of a combination of semiotic resources. This opens up new avenues in research into discourse and text analysis, which is the focus of this volume. Both O’Toole’s (1994) *The Language of Displayed Art* and Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) *Reading Images* have made pioneering efforts in the analysis of images. In addition, Callaghan and McDonald (2002) have examined music as a semiotic resource, while O’Halloran (2000, 2003) and Lemke (1998) have made extensive contributions in developing the research in mathematical and scientific text, respectively.

Language, though widely acknowledged as the key and most prominent semiotic resource in meaning making, is recognized as only one among the many semiotic resources in semiosis. Academic disciplines that focus on monomodality, such as linguistics, must come into dialogue with other fields of research, for instance, visual communication studies and media studies, to facilitate the interdisciplinary nature of multimodal research. Research into multimodality draws theories from language, semiotics, and media studies, sifts through them and tests their productivity and effectiveness when applied to a range of other semiotic resources. These theories are then integrated into the study of multimodality and extended to formulate new theories, applicable to the field. It is important to note that the need for theories and hypotheses to map the uncharted terrain of the field of multimodality does not translate to the naïve adapting of linguistic theories across to the other semiotic resources. This is despite the fact that as compared with other modalities, language is by far the most extensively researched and best understood. The derivation of theories to understand the operation and nature of other semiotic resources as well as to investigate the complexities in multimodality research stem from the hunt for a general theory of meaning. This general theory of meaning must be versatile enough to be applicable across the different semiotic resources. It must also be productive as a theory of meaning, that is, the principles drawn from the theory can be helpful for textual analysis using different semiotic resources. Therefore, any comparisons between language and other semiotic resources are made on the level of principle and not in terms of surface features.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), though originally conceived for the analysis of language, has proved to be productive in its application to an understanding of other semiotic resources. SFL originates from the work of Michael Halliday, who sees language as a social semiotic system with a role in the specific social context (Halliday, 1978). SFL is also a theory of choice, where system networks display the available options for the semiotic re-
sources. The nature and assumptions underlying SFL qualifies it as a theory of meaning where semiotic resources are used to make meaning. Detailed descriptions of SFL can be found in Halliday (1978, 1994), Martin (1992) and Matthiessen (1995).

The use of SFL as a general theory of meaning for the analysis of multimodality is not to draw unnecessary and often unhelpful comparisons with language. Instead, the purpose of using a theory proficient for investigating the nature of language is to demonstrate the general principles in which a semiotic resource operates by, and from that understanding discover systems and mechanisms at work in other semiotic resources, such as images. Pioneering work in the application of SFL to other semiotic resources other than language includes O’Toole (1994), O’Halloran (1999, 2000), and Lemke (2002). Various studies have also theorized the interaction and integration between language and images as these semiotic resources co-occur on a page. Of significance is Lemke’s (1998) observation of a “multiplication of meaning” that results through intersemiosis and O’Halloran’s (1999) identification of semiotic metaphors, where “semantic reconstruals” are brought about with a shift in the functional status of semiotic choices. Royce (1998, p. 45) also proposed an “intersemiotic complementarity” that describes the deployment of ‘intersemiotic resources’ in a multimodal text. Furthermore, Thibault (2000) uses phasal theory to effectively conceptualize a framework that can analyze the integration of language, images, sound, and music in a television advertisement.

In recent years, Thibault (2000), Baldry (2000, 2004) and O’Halloran (2004) have made significant strides in pioneering research in the analysis of moving images in the complex and dynamic environment of videotexts. Nevertheless, there is a lack of a comprehensive framework to examine processes involved in semiosis and intersemiosis in a multimodal text. In Lim (2002, 2004), a tentative attempt is made in this direction through the development of an overarching ‘meta-model’ with an accompanying ‘meta-language’ to describe and discuss the meaning made in a text utilizing both language and images as semiotic resources. The model proposed is referred to as the Integrative Multisemiotic Model (IMM) as shown in Fig. 6.1. As a meta-model, the IMM brings together and incorporates many of the matrixes and frameworks available in the field of multimodal studies from the SFL approach. This is a tentative attempt undertaken with the aim of unifying the contributions from the various matrixes on the different planes and dimensions at a meta-level.

The main aim of the model is to synthesize the various research initiatives and advances made in the field of multimodality, and to propose the possibility of an overarching research framework for analyzing intersemiosis in a multimodal text.
The focus of this chapter is primarily to demonstrate, through an analysis using the theory proposed, the meaning that is made across a sequence of images, such as that found in a comic strip, a picture book, or a series of themed advertisements. The research and discussion of this aspect of semiotic resources can be located on the discourse semantics stratum of images in the IMM, as shown in Fig. 6.1.

Drawing on Martin (1992), three communication planes are conceptualized for each semiotic resource. They are the expression plane or the display stratum, the content plane, which can be stratified into the grammar and discourse semantics stratum, and the context plane, which consists of register, genre, and ideology. The top stratum in the IMM represents the expression plane of language and images, with the suggestion that the display stratum of the text is the interface between the reader and the text. The stratified content plane of language and images are also represented in the IMM. The matrices and systems proposed by Halliday (1994) and O'Toole (1994) are adopted to account for the semiosis that occurs on the lexicogrammar and visual grammar stratum respectively. The context plane, represented significantly as the foundation of the IMM, demonstrates the anchoring of the text in both the context of situation and the context of culture. Finally, a topological space, known as the Space of Influence (SoI), is carved out in the IMM to represent the overlapping sphere of influence between language and images, specifically the interactions and negotiations of the two semiotic resources in their co-deployment. Lim
(2004) provided a full discussion of the systems at work on the expression plane as well as the operating mechanisms in the SoI. The meanings made through the systems on the expression plane and the stratified content planes are organized metafunctionally. Thibault (2000) proposed that “metafunctions are best seen as a principle of integration for approaching the experiential, interpersonal, logical, and texture dimension of the text as a whole” (p. 362). While Halliday (1978) conceptualized the notion of metafunctions for language, O’Toole (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) have demonstrated that the theory of metafunctional organization may be extended to include other semiotic systems. In other words, within the SFL tradition, other semiotic systems can be seen as organizing meaning metafunctionally.

The commonalities of metafunctional organization across semiotic resources are drawn upon and the metafunctional distinction is used as a means of integration across communication planes and semiotic resources. Metafunctions are interpreted as the common factor in all meaning-making systems, as well as the common denominator on the expression and content planes. Consequently, in light of the work pioneered by Thibault (2000), the structural principle of integration in a multimodal text is based on metafunctionality. Furthermore, the metafunctions also prove to be helpful in the theoretical segmentation of a text into typological classifications for the purpose of analysis.

On the content plane, the systems are categorized according to these metafunctions. On the lexicogrammatical stratum of language, this organization is attributed to Halliday (1994), who proposes the tri-metafunctional distinction of Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual metafunctions. The systems within the lexicogrammar stratum of language are also organized according to metafunctional meaning. Following Halliday (1985, 1994), Martin (1992) proposed that the systems operating on the discourse semantics stratum can be classified metafunctionally as well. Martin’s (1992) organization of meaning on the discourse semantics stratum for language is adapted to the systems proposed for the discourse semantics stratum for images.

### A DISCOURSE SEMANTICS STRATUM FOR IMAGES

There is a need to recognize that there is a discourse semantics stratum in operation for images as well as for language. Using Martin’s (1992) discourse semantics stratum for language, a discourse semantics stratum for the semiotic resources of images can be formulated. The systems, oriented toward Halliday’s (1978) metafunctional organizations, are proposed as VISUAL TAXONOMY, VISUAL CONFIGURATION, VISUAL REFERENCE,
and VISUAL TAXIS. In particular, for VISUAL TAXIS, which deals with the logico-semantic relations between the sequences of framed images, Mccloud’s (1993) transition scale is adapted to describe the transition relations between the frames.

The discourse semantics stratum is concerned with the relationship between a series of images such as that in a comic strip, a picture book, or a series of themed advertisements. For ease of reference, the meaning that emerges from reading a sequence of images is referred to as the emergent narrative. Systems operate on the semantics stratum to enable an interpretation of the emergent narrative from the sequential arrangement of frames. The conception and nature of systems for images on the discourse semantics stratum are adapted from Martin’s (1992) conceptions for language in the framework of SFL. Table 6.1 shows Martin’s (1992) systems and its extensions and adaptations to the discourse semantics stratum for images.

Martin (1992) has productively applied SFL to the semantics stratum of the stratified content plane. He proposes a system where the cohesive organization of the text is structured metafunctionally, to elicit “text-sized meaning” as opposed to clause-size meaning on the grammar stratum (p. 1). Martin (1992) explained, in particular, his proposed systems of IDEATION, NEGOTIATION, IDENTIFICATION, and CONJUNCTION, which he argues are the key systems for meaning at the level of the discourse semantics for language.

According to Martin (1992), IDEATION focuses on the lexis, as well as the various taxonomic, nuclear, and activity relations among the lexical items. NEGOTIATION looks at the discourse as exchange, and stemming

**TABLE 6.1**
Systems on the Discourse Semantics Stratum.
From Lim (2002, p. 62)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metafunction</th>
<th>Discourse Systems</th>
<th>Visual Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>IDEATION: Taxonomic Relations: Superordination and Composition, Nuclear and Activity Relations</td>
<td>VISUAL TAXONOMY: Associating Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>NEGOTIATION: Discourse functions, Mood, Tracking</td>
<td>VISUAL CONFIGURATION: Flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>IDENTIFICATION: Phoricity, Reference chains</td>
<td>VISUAL REFERENCE: Visual Linking Devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>CONJUNCTION: Paratactic, Hypotactic logic semantic relations</td>
<td>VISUAL TAXIS: Transition Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from the interpersonal perspective, it examines the speech act sequence and in the case of a narrative, the structure of discourse. IDENTIFICATION serves the textual metafunction where participants, for instance, people, places, and things, are tracked through the text. Finally, the system of CONJUNCTION deals with logical meaning, specifically those to do with the relations of addition, time, cause, and comparison between messages, realized variously through paratactic, hypotactic, and cohesive conjunctions. Each system's partnership with its corresponding metafunction, as well as the choices made within the systems are shown in Table 6.1. The description here is brief, as Martin (1992) has already provided a comprehensive discussion of his proposals.

Adapting principally from Martin's (1992) systems, the systems in operation on the discourse semantics stratum are referred to as VISUAL TAXONOMY, VISUAL CONFIGURATION, VISUAL REFERENCE, and VISUAL Taxis. The terms are reflective of their reconstructions for images. The system of VISUAL TAXONOMY is a reinterpretation of Martin's (1992) IDEATION system. VISUAL TAXONOMY is concerned with the choices made in the representation of the images, as well as the taxonomic, nuclear, and activity relations. These relations operate in the image through the recurrence of the Associating Elements (AE) across Works. An AE is an item that is associated in part or as part of a larger specific object, or an abstract idea or concept. These AEs may be manifested through a pictorial part-whole relationship or even a part-part relationship, not unlike the semantics of collocation for language. For instance, in Fig. 6.2, the cereals box is an AE with the indication that the setting is breakfast time in the morning. An AE can also be used as a mechanism to connect a sequence of images. This is seen in Fig. 6.2, where the presence of trees and a lamppost are AEs that

![Fig. 6.2. Associating elements and visual linking in a picture book. From Wong (2000, pp. 1-2). Dominic Duck Goes to School. Illustrated by D. Low. Singapore: SNP Education Pre Ltd. Reprinted with permission.](image-url)
function to give information on the setting, in this example, along the streets. An AE thus aids in drawing a connection between the two images arranged in a sequence. An AE operates in tandem with the system of Visual Linking Devices (VLD), within the system of VISUAL REFERENCE, in building up the unity and cohesiveness of the emergent narrative.

VISUAL REFERENCE, with its linguistic counterpart IDENTIFICATION expresses the textual metafunction. This system is concerned with tracking participants in a discourse. For pictures, reference chains take the form of Visual Linking Devices (VLD), where the recurrences of these VLD function textually to create cohesion. These VLD are analogous to the motifs found in a linguistic text, where the recurring elements function as connectors between a sequence of images to strengthen the Flow. A common VLD is the depiction of the main character of the narrative. These VLD also operate as chains of reference, bringing coherence and cohesiveness across the sequence, and formulating a cohesive and coherent emergent narrative.

The system of VISUAL CONFIGURATION serves the interpersonal metafunction and is concerned with the discourse structure generated by the sequential reading of the various texts. More specifically, it focuses on the emergence of a narrative structure or the emergent narrative with the reading of a series of pictures through the system known as Flow. Flow determines the level of reader's engagement and reasoning necessary to obtain the emergent narrative from the image sequences. In a series of images that are connected strongly with many VLDs and AEs, the system of Flow is strong; hence, a lower level of engagement is required on the part of the reader to obtain the emergent narrative. In contrast, a text with few instances of VLD and AE will lead to a weak Flow. In such cases, the reader is required to be more involved, in order to ‘make sense’ of the emergent narrative. Figure 6.3 shows the contrast in Flow between two sets of frames.

The system of VISUAL TAXIS deals with the type of relationship between each image in a sequence. In a sense, VISUAL TAXIS serves the logical metafunction. This is based on the various structural relations or the formulation of taxis types from language in Martin's (1992) system of CONJUNCTION. VISUAL TAXIS applies these taxis types to describe the logical-semantic relations across a sequence. The taxis types in images, however, are not limited to merely paratactic and hypotactic relations as they are with language. Instead, there can be different types of logico-semantic relations or “transition relations” across a series. McCloud (1993), working in the field of comic art, proposes a useful transition scale for viewing comics. In this chapter, I reinterpret McCloud's (1993) transition scale, from an SFL perspective, as a categorization of the logico-semantic relations in an image sequence.

McCloud (1993) proposed six categories on a transition scale to “unravel some of the mysteries surrounding the invisible art of comics storytelling”
These conceptions are useful in their applications to all the logico-semantic relationships for images, regardless of whether the genre is comic strips, picture books, or a series of advertisements sharing the same theme. In this chapter, these categories are reinterpreted and extended in the light of Martin’s (1992) SFL metafunctionally oriented systems. The purpose of this is to examine how these systems operating together can aid in our understanding of how the emergent narrative is obtained from the sequence of frames. McCloud’s (1993) transition relations categories are reproduced in Fig. 6.4.

The Moment-to-Moment transition relation represents events over time at different instantiations. The time lapse is usually not very significant and the reader is able to interpret the narrative in the sequence rather easily. This is because the VLDs, usually in the guise of the main subjects, is in op-
eration. The setting or scene, another VLD, also often remains constant across the frames of Moment-to-Moment transition relation. In other words, there are only minimal actions, represented by the slight shift in the positions of objects, to suggest the passing of time. In addition, the system of Flow is strong, allowing an easy access to the emergent narrative in a Moment-to-Moment transition type of logico-semantic relationship.

The next type of transition relation is the Action-to-Action progression. According to a study done by McCloud (1993, p. 75), this category is very popular in comic strips. The Action-to-Action transition relation is similar to the Moment-to-Moment transition relation in that both are dependent on the salient VLD and a strong existent Flow across the frames. However, the main difference between the two is that in the Action-to-Action transition relation, the main emphasis, instead of time, is the sequence of activity or movement.

The Subject-to-Subject transition relation uses fewer VLD for tracking the participants in each frame. Instead, the system of AE is used to represent the part-whole and part-part relationship between the frames. The system of Flow is also not as strong as in the previous two categories, hence requiring a stronger engagement by the reader to make certain assumptions in order to understand the emergent narrative. As McCloud (1993) observed, “the degree of reader involvement is necessary to render these transitions meaningful” (p. 71).

Requiring even greater reader involvement and deductive reasoning is the Scene-to-Scene transition relation. Here a VLD or an AE may be de-
ployed. The main characteristic of the Scene-to-Scene transition relation is the lapse of “significant distances of time and space” (McCloud, 1993, p. 71) from one frame to the next. Hence, the system of Flow between these frames is considerably weaker. The Aspect-to-Aspect transition relation traces different aspects of a place, idea, or mood over time, similar to a wandering eye of a hypothetical reader. Here, the system of AE is dominant as the reader builds on the part–part or part–whole relations in order to make sense of the emergent narrative.

Finally, McCloud (1993) proposes a Non-Sequitur transition relation for frames, where the system of Flow is nonexistent. Even the system of VLD and Motifs are absent in this form of transition. In other words, in a Non-Sequitur transition, there is no emergent narrative, nor any logical relations between the frames. The impracticality and unlikelihood of such a transition suggests that the proposal of a Non-Sequitur transition is unnecessary except for the theoretical purposes of having a polar extreme for contrast. McCloud’s (1993) proposal of a Non-Sequitur transition relation is therefore unrealistic and unlikely in a textual instantiation, particularly so in a picture book as the frames are positioned deliberately and meaningfully in a sequence. McCloud (1993) stated, “no matter how dissimilar one image may be to another, there is a kind of alchemy at work in the space between panels [frames] which can help us find meaning or resonance in even the more jarring of combinations” (p. 73). The theories and systems proposed in this chapter attempt to describe this ‘alchemy’ through the proposal of the systems of VLD, AE, and Flow, to obtain a clearer understanding of the ‘magic’ in the space between the frames.

O’Toole (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argued that images are tools or semiotic resources, equal to language in meaning making. In other words, images are able to operate independently from language to make meaning and, through a sequence, bring about an emergent narrative. In the next section, two comic strips are analyzed and comparisons are made between them. The systems and mechanisms proposed on the discourse semantics stratum for images are also applied to demonstrate its usefulness and productivity in explaining the cohesion and coherence of the sequence in the emergent narrative.

ANALYSIS OF BABY BLUES® COMIC STRIPS

Analysis One

The emergent narrative in Comic strip A in Fig. 6.5 unfolds over five visual sequences, or across five frames. Although the child, Hammie, is portrayed as producing a “BBBBBB” sound in some of the frames, language does not
play a significant role in propelling the emergent narrative, except perhaps for signifying Hammie’s pleasure and enjoyment as he plays with the toy. The sound produced in the first, second, and fifth frames consists of the same representation in the linguistic mode, suggesting that Hammie is deriving equal satisfaction as he plays with the different toys in these frames.

The representation of the image in each frame can be analyzed at the level of the expression plane and grammar stratum with the systems proposed by Lim (2004) and O’Toole (1994), respectively. Due to space limitations, an exhaustive analysis of each frame in the comic strip on the expression plane and grammar stratum will not be presented in this chapter. The focus is directed to the meaning made in the emergent narrative that is represented by the sequence of images, across the five frames. The interframe relationships operate on the discourse semantic stratum. As such, the systems and mechanisms proposed are used to analyze and explicate the meaning made through the sequence.

At the level of representation, or the ideational metafunction, the system of VISUAL TAXONOMY employs the Associating Elements (AE) to narrate the setting and to provide the contextual environment in which the emergent narrative takes place. For instance, in the first frame, the child Hammie functions as an AE suggesting that the narrative revolves around a family setting involving children. The representation of the parents, Darryl and Wanda, in the fourth and fifth frames suggests that the narrative is possibly about parenting and family issues. The AE also locates the setting of the story through the representation of the fragmented but recognizable parts of a television set, a table, and a couch. Through the operation of synecdoche, the part–whole relationship of the AE indicates a domestic setting of a living room in a house. The AE of the couch and the table emerges as the scene enlarges to show Darryl and Wanda sitting on the couch. The implications of the decision to only show the parents in the penultimate and ultimate frames is for the dual purpose of creating an ironic effect and
of not distracting from the central figure of Hammie and his activity in the first three frames. The consistent representation of the AE of the couch and the table throughout all frames suggests that setting and venue remain unchanged throughout the emergent narrative in Comic strip A.

With regards to the textual metafunction, there is cohesiveness between the five frames that comprise the emergent narrative. This unity is achieved through the Visual Linking Devices (VLD). The system of VISUAL REFERENCE enables the tracking of participants and motifs in each frame as they function as a VLD to connect semantically the series of images. In this comic strip, the main protagonist, Hammie, functions as the key VLD, as he is represented in every frame. In addition, the representation of Hammie in all five frames suggests the centrality of Hammie in the narrative. Hammie in his activity of play is being observed not just by his parents but also by the assumed reader. The toy truck, which Hammie plays with, also functions as VLD. The deployment of VLDs builds cohesive relations between each frame in the emergent narrative. Finally, the AEs of the couch and the table also contribute to the textual metafunction of the narrative by reinforcing the unity and cohesion in the text. The AEs indicate that the activity within each frame occurs at the same venue, hence, giving the series of images in Comic strip A greater commonalities.

Having discussed the representational and compositional meaning of the comic strip, it is worthwhile to look at how the visual text interacts and engages with the assumed reader. As before, the focus here is not on how the image in each frame engages the assumed reader, as that would be examined on the expression plane and visual grammar stratum. Rather, the discussion in this chapter focuses on the dynamics at work where the assumed reader makes meaning between frames that are presented in a sequence.

The system of VISUAL CONFIGURATION uses the notion of Flow to account for the assumed reader's engagement with the series of frames. The theory suggests that a strong Flow will require a lower level of engagement and reasoning on the part of the assumed reader in order to make meaning from the visual series. A strong Flow is the result of having a substantial number of AEs and VLDs in operation so that the reader can easily make the linkages and connections between each frame. As the reading of a comic strip is usually for light entertainment purposes, a strong Flow is usually found in comic strips to facilitate the ease of engagement, requiring minimal reasoning from the assumed reader. Some sequentially themed advertisements may intentionally have a weak Flow in order to encourage greater engagement and to provoke thought in an attempt to leave a more lasting impression on the consumer.

The plot of the emergent narrative in the comic strip is propelled forward by the logical metafunction. Through the system of VISUAL TAXIS, the logico-semantic relationships between the different frames are explained.
and the emergent narrative is developed. As discussed earlier, McCloud (1993) proposed six categories of transition relations to account for the logico-semantic relations between each frame. In most comic strips, the predominant taxis type between each frame is that of Action-to-Action. This is because of the dominant VLDs and AEs, as well as the strong Flow between each frame. The focus between the frames in this example is on the activities of Hammie.

The category of Moment-to-Moment transition focuses on time whereas Action-to-Action transition focuses on action. As such, the first transition relation between the first and second frames can be described as Moment-to-Moment transition, as the main emphasis is in time passing. In both frames, Hammie is represented as being involved in the same activity, that is, playing with the toy truck. The main purpose of the transition between the two frames is to represent the passage of time as well as to convey Hammie’s enjoyment as he plays with his toy truck.

As mentioned earlier, the transition relation of Action-to-Action is very popular with comic strips. A possible explanation could be that the emergent narrative presented through a comic strip often occurs over a shorter temporal duration and places greater emphasis on the activities and actions taking place in the narrative. Lim (2002, p. 127) has shown that picture books for children tend to have more Scene-to-Scene transitions, as each frame is crucial in representing a specific narrative stage in the plot. Themed advertisements, on the other hand, may utilize more Subject-to-Subject transition as the focus in the advertisement is on the product they are selling.

Even though the focus in this chapter is on the meaning made from a sequence of images, it must be noted that the analysis on the discourse semantics stratum is only partial in understanding the total meaning made in the comic strip. A visual grammar analysis is necessary to account for the activities and interactions that go on in each frame as well as the representation of each frame. In addition, the expression plane of the image in each frame is significant as well, although an analysis of the systems available and choices made on these planes are not discussed here.

Nonetheless, for the purposes of understanding the meaning made in the emergent narrative, it is necessary to mention the representations in the last two frames, as they are particularly crucial in decoding the meaning in the emergent narrative. In the fourth frame, Hammie is represented as being drawn toward the doll he finds on the floor. A visual grammar analysis would draw attention to the smile on Wanda’s face, contrasting it with Darryl’s frown. The parents’ emotions are reversed in the fifth frame when Hammie plays with the doll as if it were a toy truck. Here, a visual grammar analysis would show Wanda’s disappointment in contrast to Darryl’s relief. The humor suggested here is the difference in the parents’ expectation of
their children as well as how the innocent actions of a child can affect the parents’ emotions. The implications of the parents’ responses toward Hammie’s action can very well lead to a discussion of gender stereotypes and the interrogation of societal conventions. Following the IMM proposed earlier, these implications and issues could be discussed on the plane of Ideology on the context stratum.

Analysis Two

In this section, a second analysis is performed on another comic strip for the purposes of comparison and contrast with the first analysis. Comic strip B in Fig. 6.6 is chosen for its unconventional and atypical features. This is to demonstrate the versatility and productivity of the conceptions and systems proposed on the discourse semantics stratum in unveiling the meaning made in these visual sequences.

In Comic strip B, the emergent narrative unfolds over six frames. Darryl is presented as the main protagonist as he is shown in all six frames. On the level of the ideational metafunction, the Associating Elements (AE) play a crucial role in determining the setting as the location in each frame. This is because, with the exception of the third and fourth frames, the location in which the action takes place in each frame changes markedly. In the first frame, the AEs of a magazine rack, counter table, and cash machine implies that the setting is a shop. The AE of a cashier in the process of scanning the price on the football also reinforces the setting and determines the nature of the activity represented in this frame, in this case, a sales transaction in a shop. The second frame shows Darryl in a car. The car functions as an AE to suggest that Darryl is traveling. Just as in the first analysis, synecdoche is used where the part of the car shown is sufficient to signify the entire car. The AE of the car by extension also conveys the concept of travel, and though the location is represented as being in a car in this case, the AE also

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implies a notion of travel taking place. In other words, the AE does not only indicate settings, but can function to suggest concepts such as travel and movement as well.

The second frame is also particularly interesting as it can be interpreted as a frame within a frame. The thought bubble depicts a scene of his family and him playing football in a field. This picture represents the ideal that Darryl has in mind, and the humor that emerges when his ideal clashes with the reality of the disastrous game as represented in the fifth frame. The use of images instead of language to represent what Darryl is thinking is significant. Not only does it demonstrate the proficiency of images as a semiotic resource to represent what someone may be thinking, it also suggests that the use of images may be more effective and appropriate than language in conveying certain ideas. As demonstrated in this instance, through the representation of the ideal in the thought bubble in the second frame and the unfortunate reality in the fifth frame, a strong contrast is drawn, producing the effect of irony and visual humor. This effect would have been much less if language had been used to represent Darryl’s thoughts.

The AEs in the third frame include the door and the doormat. In addition, the walls also function as an AE indicating that the setting is in a house. The representation of Wanda’s and Zoe’s delight at the football can also be elicited through a detailed visual grammar analysis. However, as explained earlier, for the purpose of this chapter, it is sufficient to have the intuitive meaning derived from the image without endeavoring a detailed analysis of how the meaning is made on the visual grammar stratum. The fourth frame consists of the AE of the wall, with the suggestion that the family has moved away from the door and is moving into the house.

The fifth frame shows the family in an open field having a rather unsuccessful game of football. Interestingly, to represent an open field and clear sky, the AE used is that of a void, an absence of objects, with the sole exception of green turf. In other words, with an ingenious and appropriate representation, a conspicuous absence can function effectively as an AE just like the representation of objects and items. Once again, a visual grammar analysis will explain more fully the series of accidents with the football and the family experiences. In the final frame, AEs such as the couches and the table indicate that the family are back in the house and are nursing their injuries in the living room. Significantly, at the sidewall, the reader is shown the football as having been thrown away in the trashcan. The discarding of the football into the trashcan positioned at the bottom right corner of the frame functions effectively as a conclusion to this emergent narrative. The system of Visual Taxonomy is tapped into extensively in this comic strip to signify to the reader the changes in location for the activity in each frame. This contrasts with Comic strip A, where all the action takes place in the same location and thus the same AEs are repeated across the frames.
As mentioned earlier, the central figure in this comic strip is Darryl. Both Darryl and the football are represented in every frame. As the setting depicted in each frame is different, the role of Darryl and the football as a VLD is crucial for linking the frames textually. The presence of the VLD in each of the frames provides unity and lends cohesion to the sequence. This compares with Comic strip A, where the protagonist, Hammie, and the consistent setting across the frames function as the VLD to provide textual cohesion for the emergent narrative. The role of the VLD is relatively more significant in Comic strip B due to the absence of a common AE in most of the frames. Hence, the main connection between the frames in Comic strip B is the VISUAL REFERENCE of the protagonist Darryl and the subject of football.

In comparison with Comic strip A, the system of Flow in Comic strip B is relatively weaker. This is due to the lack of common AEs across the frames. The result of this weaker Flow suggests that the reader would have to be more involved in making the connections between the frames. However, it must be noted that this increase in effort is relative to Comic strip A. This is because in Comic strip B, even without the advantage of having a common AE, the VLD and the cultural knowledge of the reader would aid in the reasoning, enabling meaning to be made from the visual sequence. The system of VISUAL CONFIGURATION thus operates differently in Comic strip B in comparison to Comic strip A, as greater engagement is required from the reader for Comic strip B.

The logico-semantic relations between the frames in Comic strip B also differ from those in Comic strip A. This is due to the differences in the system of VISUAL TAXIS used. The main category of transition relations in Comic strip B is that of Subject-to-Subject. This is with the exception of the third and fourth frames, where the relation is that of Action-to-Action. The category of Subject-to-Subject, though unusual for a comic strip, is particularly effective in this case as the focus of the emergent narrative revolves around Darryl and the football he bought. Using that as the main theme, each image transports us to a different location, depicting Darryl's adventure with the football in progression. Unlike Comic strip A, and for that matter, most comic strips, the emergent narrative from this strip takes place over an extended period of time. As such, arguably, the most suitable and effective category of transition relation in Comic strip B is that of Subject-to-Subject.

CONCLUSION

The conceptions of the discourse semantics stratum, with the systems for images as well as mechanisms such as Associating Elements, Visual Linking Devices, and Flow, have enabled a better understanding of the meaning made
in the multimodal text analyzed here. It has also provided a meta-language to describe the phenomenon of semiosis in sequential text. McCloud's (1993) categories of taxis relations have also been productively adapted to illustrate the interframe relations. Using the metafunctional approach, the systems at the level of discourse semantics for images address the representation, engagement, compositional, and logical aspects of semiosis in a text structured as a sequence of framed and connected messages.

In this chapter, the analyses of two comic strips demonstrate the workings of the systems on the discourse semantics stratum. Lim (2002) has also applied the systems proposed productively to an analysis of a picture book. Nonetheless, the attempt to understand how meaning is made in a series of visual text remains a research area that requires much exploration. The theories and conceptions made in this chapter represent a tentative step toward a better understanding of the nature of images. Further research could be made in the application of the theories and systems proposed in this chapter to these kinds of series of images in other genres, for instance, advertisements.

The integration of language and images in a text requires a multimodal approach that is only possible when the semiotic resource of images is better understood. The proposal of the Integrative Multisemiotic Model (IMM) is a modest attempt to provide a rudimentary framework for the analysis of the co-deployment of language and images in a multimodal text. It is hoped that the ideas and conceptions proposed, though at a provisional and exploratory stage, can facilitate further research through the application of these ideas to a wider variety of multimodal texts, which may either build upon or find alternatives to these notions.

REFERENCES


6. THE VISUAL SEMANTICS STRATUM
